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# The art of war : deconstructing the monolith of the World War II poster

Sean Williams

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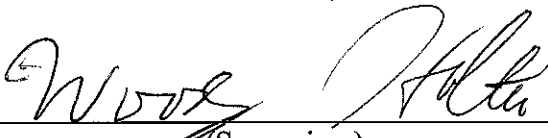
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# The Art of War: Deconstructing the Monolith of the World War II Poster

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HIST 413: Honors Research Seminar  
Senior Thesis  
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Spring Semester 2007

This paper is part of the requirements for honors in history. The signature below, by the thesis supervisor, demonstrates that Sean Williams has met all the requirements needed to receive honors in history.

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
(Supervisor)

This thesis is respectfully dedicated to my mother and father, whose taped-to-the-wall reminders to pick up my toys and not spill soda on the floor trained me at an early age for poster analysis.

Thanks also to Dr. Woody Holton for his tireless work in editing and revisions. Any mistakes that remain are most certainly my own.

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## **Introduction – Uncle Sam Cries Uncle?**

For most Americans, the introduction to World War II posters, or even the entire field of posters during wartime in general, comes in the form of an elderly, yet bold looking man wearing red, white and blue. He wears a striped hat, and stands with his finger pointed outwards. The message he gives is clear -- “I want YOU!” This image has been faithfully reproduced in social studies and history textbooks for years. (Indeed, both generations of my family saw such an image in their school books).

Uncle Sam, though, dapper as he may be, is merely one example of hundreds of posters created by government agencies, corporations, and even private citizens during World War II. These posters cover a wide variety of topics, ranging from nutrition, to victory gardens, to recruitment, to production, and many, many more.

With notable exceptions, works on American poster propaganda to date seem content to compile these documents into collections. Still, this paper stands on the shoulders of well-researched scholarship on World War II era posters, including *Design for Victory: World War II Posters on the American Home Front*, a source from which this entire project drew its inspiration, as well as *The Thought War*, a work which turns the analytical lens on Japanese wartime propaganda. More general works on propaganda and general history of the war are utilized in order to put these posters in their proper context.

For the sake of depth, this analysis shall delve into three types of World War II posters. First, war bonds posters will be analyzed. In doing so, a picture of the vastly different ways the United States Treasury attempted to get average Americans to give up hard-earned money will become abundantly clear. Secondly, “careless talk” posters will continue to challenge the monolith of the World War II poster. If you are among the

many who believe men to be the only order-barking entities of World War II, this section will convince you otherwise. Finally, the last bastion of the monolith will be taken head on. Recruitment posters themselves will go under the microscope of analysis, and come out as what all World War II posters are: distinctive works with unifying themes. All of this will occur with minimal interference from the high school history textbook's favorite son, Uncle Sam. In fact, in the final section of the paper, I reveal the exact number of times that Uncle Sam appeared in my sample. The answer will likely shock you.

Over one hundred posters have been analyzed for both their text and their images. All directly-cited posters will appear in an attached appendix, so that the reader may judge the visually-based arguments that this paper presents for him or herself. It is this paper's contention that the monolith that is the World War II poster is deeply and hopelessly flawed, due to the tendencies of these works to vary greatly based on time, subject, focus, and target.

This is the story that your eleventh grade history textbook never told you.

This paper could not have been written without the tremendous resource that is the Northwestern University Library's World War II Poster Collection, which contains over three hundred posters from the start of the war on through 1945. Most of the one hundred plus posters that I analyzed for this project came from this collection, and most of the images appearing in the appendix do as well. Occasional poster citations come from other places (most often *Design for Victory*, which will be described shortly), but the vast majority of my primary sources come from the Northwestern site.

Secondary research on the topic of war posters reveals one text that stands head and shoulders above the rest. William Bird, Jr. and Harry R. Rubenstein's *Design for*



*Victory: World War II Posters on the American Home Front* covers an extraordinarily broad ground in a mere 111 pages. Bird and Rubenstein's work focuses on all aspects of the poster process: from the thoughts in the heads of those who designed the posters to occasional analysis of the posters themselves, and it does this with examples of seemingly every poster type imaginable. Many of the insights this paper makes were encouraged by the methodology and technique of these two gentlemen, and the paper also offers additional evidence in support of several of their contentions. This paper's goal is to go even deeper than Bird and Rubenstein did.

Also important to the methodology of my paper was *The Thought War*, by Barak Kushner.<sup>1</sup> His work on Japanese imperial propaganda provided me with valuable parallels. Asking why Japanese citizens grew to embrace a devastating and long lasting war, Kushner came to the conclusion that it was not emperor worship or military glorification that truly brought the Japanese on board. It was instead the projected image of Japan as the leader of a new Asia. This study led me to look for similar concepts put on a pedestal in the American posters, and gave me the concept of breaking down an existing monolith as it exists in the eyes of the public.

I also consulted a wide variety of sources to situate myself in the period and propaganda frame of mind. *Freedom from Fear* by David Kennedy has been used to brush up on my World War II history, and is the source for several statistics and other bits of supporting information throughout the text.<sup>2</sup> Maureen Honey's *Creating Rosie the Riveter: Class, Gender and Propaganda During World War II* was a great help when it

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<sup>1</sup> Barak Kushner, *The Thought War: Japanese Imperial Propaganda* (Hawai'i, 2005).

<sup>2</sup> David Kennedy, *Freedom From Fear: The American People in Depression and War* (New York, 1995).

came to the subject of women, addressed several times in this paper.<sup>3</sup>

Finally, I would be remiss to not mention the various professors who helped me along the way in this research project. The advice of Dr. Stephen Addiss of the University of Richmond's Art History department on how to look at images proved greatly useful during this project. I must also thank Dr. Woody Holton, Dr. Hugh West, Dr. Nicole Sackley, Dr. David Brandenberger, and Dr. Joanna Drell of the University of Richmond History Department for their aid with sources and moral support along the way. Thanks also goes to Dr. Matthew Basso of the University of Utah for aid with finding sources.

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<sup>3</sup> Maureen Honey, *Creating Rosie the Riveter: Class, Gender, and Propaganda During World War II* (Amherst, 1984).

## **War Bonds**

The importance of bonds to the American war effort cannot be overstated. To fight World War II, America needed resources - tanks, guns, airplanes, soldiers, and most importantly, money. Without sufficient funds, America could not have sent all of its goods and soldiers overseas to where the actual fighting occurred. The very existence of these posters tells the historian one simple fact: to prosecute the war effectively, America needed more money than it had.

Though all war bonds posters had the goal of selling war bonds, how they achieved this goal varied wildly. War bonds posters targeted a wide variety of audiences, from workers on the factory floor, to younger children, to women. Furthermore, they utilized an equally wide variety of appeals to the public, and invoked imagery ranging from the home front to the front lines of battle. These facts lead to one inexorable conclusion: there is no single, monolithic war bonds poster.

Among the many appeals made by the creators of war bonds posters, patriotism was the most common. How these posters made patriotic appeals, though, varied dramatically. The most popular design of World War II was simple, with an image of the American flag on it. Further adding to the patriotic imagery of the poster were the famous words of Franklin Delano Roosevelt, "We can...we will...we must!" This poster appeared on 30,000 billboards during 1942, and it was eventually reprinted in four million smaller, colored reproductions.<sup>4</sup> Poster makers did not stop at using Roosevelt's words, however. President Roosevelt himself appears on several posters of the era,

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<sup>4</sup> "We Can, We Will, We Must," in William Bird, Jr. and Harry R. Rubenstein, *Design for Victory: World War II Posters on the American Home Front* (New York, 1998), 23.

usually with the American flag draped in the background. Perhaps the most poignant FDR poster is a memorial issued after his death. The former President's face is superimposed over a dark sky, in an almost God-like fashion. Beneath him is a family, looking up reverently at the former President and a cross marking his resting place.<sup>5</sup>

The imagery of the flag and Roosevelt created a patriotic ambiance in these posters. In designing posters such as these, the creators attempted to equate patriotism with the purchasing of war bonds. As President of the United States for most of World War II, Franklin D. Roosevelt could be seen almost as a father figure during the war. His words were heard or read by millions, and as such, a poster featuring his image on it carried legitimacy.

Patriotic imagery was often combined in these posters with patriotic text to create an even more potent work. One successful campaign of this sort offered citizens a "share in America." As Bird and Rubenstein state in *Design for Victory*, U.S. Treasury officials saw the phrase as a way to "transform people from being mere observers into active participants."<sup>6</sup> To sell war bonds, the Treasury Department not only had to convince potential bond-holders to part with their hard-earned money, but also that their contribution was significant. The "share in America" tactic worked by convincing Americans that, by purchasing a bond, they were becoming part of the war effort. As part-owners of America, they were as important to the war effort as were the soldiers on the front line. These words appeared on multiple posters, especially in the earliest phases of the war. One "share" poster sees this union between the country and its people

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<sup>5</sup> "Buy Victory Bonds," in Bird and Rubenstein, *Design for Victory: World War II Posters on the American Home Front*, 49.

<sup>6</sup> Bird and Rubenstein, *Design for Victory: World War II Posters on the American Home Front*, 21.

embodied in the form of a handshake. One hand has a partial American flag on its wrist, symbolizing the government, while the other hand represents the common citizen.<sup>7</sup> The handshake takes place above a factory's smokestacks, thus uniting the three major sources of money and goods for the war effort: government, citizen, and factory. Still another poster depicts America as a giant steel piggy bank, with a hand dropping a quarter inside.<sup>8</sup>

These patriotic appeals were targeted mainly at workers, and with good reason. It was the workers who were making the money that the government needed for the war effort. Posters such as "Buy a Share in America" feature imagery familiar to the worker, such as the factory itself, smokestacks, or fellow workers. Indeed, war bonds posters as a whole use the imagery of the worker widely and freely. Many posters encouraged all readers to put 10 percent of their paycheck on payday into war bonds, but it is the image of a factory worker that often appeared in conjunction with the message.

Another key message that the government used to sell war bonds was guilt. By contrasting the battles on the front line with the comparatively easier life on the home front, the U.S. Treasury Department hoped to convince Americans to part with their hard-earned cash. "I Gave a Man!" from 1942 depicts a family of three, consisting of a mother and two young children. Missing from this family portrait is the father, as the poster clearly implies that her husband has gone off to fight. Serving as the punch line to this poster depicting a grave woman with her two innocent children is the question "Will you

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<sup>7</sup> "Buy a Share in America," in Bird and Rubenstein, *Design for Victory: World War II Posters on the American Home Front*, 24.

<sup>8</sup> "Buy a Share in America (Piggy Bank)," University of Northwestern World War II Poster Collection. < <http://www.library.northwestern.edu/govinfo/collections/wwii-posters/>>.

give at least 10% of your pay in war bonds?”<sup>9</sup> Compared to the suffering that this woman and her husband or son at war are going through, giving 10 percent of one’s paycheck in war bonds seemed like a trifling burden.

Similar posters went directly to the front line to deliver their message. “Doing All You Can, Brother?” was perhaps the best example of this strategy. This 1943 offering shows a wounded soldier, with a bloody bandage wrapped around his forehead. He stares out of the poster; eyes opened wide, a questioning look on his face. If the answer to his question is “no,” the solution to such a problem is graciously offered by the ubiquitous words appearing at the bottom of the poster in big, black letters: “BUY WAR BONDS!”<sup>10</sup> Posters such as this strove to equate the soldier on the front lines with the citizen on the home front. Soldiers were required to make sacrifices in war, and with so much at stake, so too were citizens. This is the message that “guilt” posters carry, using images of suffering to elicit sympathy and guilt from those Americans not serving in combat, and ultimately to fill the war chest.

Other posters chose to appeal to viewers’ sympathy. Often, these posters invoked the images of children, left behind on the home front while their fathers were off fighting. “Protect His Future” features a child being held in the air by two hands. The hands appear to be attached to an unseen body, clad in a business suit. The text of the poster implores the reader to “Buy and Keep War Bonds.”<sup>11</sup> The poster clearly implies the hands as being those of the child’s father, presumably a combatant in the war. As opposed to doing his

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<sup>9</sup> “I Gave A Man,” University of Northwestern World War II Poster Collection.

<sup>10</sup> “Doing All You Can, Brother?” University of Northwestern Poster Collection.

<sup>11</sup> “Protect His Future,” in Bird and Rubenstein, *Design for Victory: World War II Posters on the American Home Front*, 48.

patriotic duty, or doing his part in the war effort, a viewer who purchased war bonds based on this poster did so out of sympathy for the child. The logic of such sympathy-based posters implied that purchasing war bonds would give the soldiers fighting in the war more supplies. More supplies led to a better chance of success, which, in turn, led to a better chance that the child's father would return home safely.

A less blatant appeal was often made through war bonds posters through a different means, namely religion. Several war bonds posters asked the reader to give 10 percent of his pay in bonds. This percentage is the same as the religious *tithe* many Judeo-Christian denominations ask their followers to pay. The use of the term "brother" in "Doing All You Can, Brother?" also appealed to some religious sense. Even the Christmas posters utilized imagery that, while certainly not purely religious, is inexorably linked to a Christian holiday. Religious appeals were not nearly as overt as patriotic or guilt based appeals. Instead, they appeared subtly, often combining their imagery with other appeals in order to get their message across.

Continuing away from purely patriotic motives, we finally arrive at the other end of the spectrum: self-interest. Recognizing that not all people are equally patriotic or altruistic, the Treasury Department also commissioned a variety of posters appealing to self-interest, particularly of the economic variety. The 1943 offering from the U.S. Treasury Department, "Give War Bonds, The Present With a Future," depicts a Christmas tree with a sparse amount of presents underneath, and bonds placed throughout the tree like ornaments. This poster has several implications. The sparseness of presents beneath the tree can be seen as a representation of economic hardship, during a time in which many families found themselves cash-strapped. Even with such restrictions, the

picture implies that instead of lots of presents containing frivolous toys, Americans should give gifts of war bonds, which help the country and its soldiers during a time of great need. If this more altruistic motivation is not enough, though, the poster provides plenty of more selfish reasons to buy war bonds. Bonds will eventually pay dividends for those who purchase them, and so in that sense they are indeed the “present with a future.” War bonds thus benefited both the government and citizen, giving the citizen a return on his investment, and giving the government the money so badly needed to prosecute the war.<sup>12</sup> Furthermore, the future this poster referred to could be seen in a number of different ways: the future of soldiers off fighting the war, to even the future of American existence itself. The United States was locked in war with three dangerous enemies, and the outcome was far from certain. Beyond economic self-interest, this poster implied an even broader self-interest in buying war bonds. If not for the money war bonds granted, it was possible that the United States could lose World War II. A United States taken over by any of the Axis powers would have likely seen grave losses of freedom that would have been in the self-interest of very few Americans.

Beyond posters that hint at such economic gains, there is a poster that went so far as to clearly explain such potential gains in exact figures. The 1945 poster “Buy Bonds Regularly” is little more than a table containing how much money will be made at intervals of one, five, and ten years if one puts amounts ranging from \$3.75 to \$18.75 weekly into war bonds. The background of the poster is orange, but with words in white such as “retirement” and “start a business” -- possible suggestions for what the poster

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<sup>12</sup> “Give War Bonds,” in Bird and Rubenstein, *Design for Victory: World War II Posters on the American Home Front*, 6.



viewer could do with profits from war bonds.<sup>13</sup>

Over the five years of America's participation in World War II, war bonds posters evolved and changed. While many differences in the posters could be seen as simply changes to suit an audience, others were more easily categorized by the year and situation in which they were released. It is easy to overlook the words on a poster when analyzing the imagery; however, the words are vital to understanding the changes the posters undergo. Among war bonds posters, the key changes over time included what Bird and Rubenstein call the "obsolescence" of defense terminology, and their subsequent discovery of the change from "defense bonds" to "war bonds," as well as the growing use of the soldier in the posters as the war winds towards its conclusion.

The name "war bonds" as used to describe bonds during World War II is perhaps misleading. This fact came to light through an analysis of the terminology used for the bonds in posters advertising them. From the earliest posters of 1941 and 1942, few posters mentioned "war bonds." Instead, "defense bonds" are advertised. A 1941 poster, "This Year, Give a Share in America," depicts Santa Claus imploring viewers to purchase "defense bonds and stamps."<sup>14</sup> The "share in America" campaign, as a whole, was centered in the 1941-1942 period, and each of the posters featured the use of "defense bonds." This is important, as "defense bonds" had a different connotation than "war bonds" do. Bird and Rubenstein explain the terminology of "defense bonds" as being used to promote cooperation, and make citizens believe they were helping defend the

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<sup>13</sup> "Buy Bonds Regularly," in Bird and Rubenstein, *Design for Victory: World War II Posters on the American Home Front*, 48.

<sup>14</sup> "This Year, Give a Share in America," in Bird and Rubenstein, *Design for Victory: World War II Posters on the American Home Front*, 23.

country.<sup>15</sup> It can also be argued, however, that the use of the word “defense” was appropriate due to the country’s state of mind following Pearl Harbor. War with Japan and Germany was undertaken because of this foreign attack on American soil, and safety was on the minds of many Americans. “Defense,” therefore, would reasonably have been a popular theme among those fearful of another Pearl Harbor. This rationale, while reasonable, turned out to be the exact opposite of what happened. In spite of how appropriate “defense” bonds may have seemed, the post Pearl Harbor period saw a rise in anger on the part of American citizens. America, after all, was now officially at war.

Nineteen forty-two onwards sees the familiar “war bonds” terminology used increasingly, to the point of near exclusivity. Of the bond posters I examined from the Northwestern University source, three-quarters (fifteen out of twenty) of the posters, utilized the qualifying term “war” in the watershed year of 1942. A comparison of two similar posters shows this evolution clearly. The 1943 Christmas-themed poster “Give War Bonds, The Present With A Future,” features a Christmas tree, with war bonds in place of ornaments.<sup>16</sup> When compared to the use of the “defense bonds” terminology in the 1941 offering “This Year, Give A Share In America,” it is clear that a change has occurred. A vast majority of posters from 1942, and especially 1943 onwards feature the use of “war bonds.” “War bonds” was clearly a less passive term than “defense bonds,” and indicated a more aggressive stance through the posters. No longer was World War II simply an effort to protect the American homeland. Instead, war bonds posters now, through their text, depicted a more aggressive image of a war fought for wider reasons

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<sup>15</sup> Bird and Rubenstein, *Design for Victory: World War II Posters on the American Home Front*, 21.

<sup>16</sup> “Give War Bonds: The Present With A Future,” in Bird and Rubenstein, *Design for Victory: World War II Posters on the American Home Front*, 6.

than mere self-defense. A series of 1943 war bonds posters supported this ideology, using Franklin D. Roosevelt's Four Freedoms as a theme. Freedom from want, freedom of speech, freedom of worship, and freedom from fear indicate larger concepts than simply protecting America from attack. These posters also seem to meet the opinion of a public at large. No longer, Bird and Rubenstein say, are wishy-washy terms like "defense" seen as positives.<sup>17</sup> These posters indicate an ideology that America is fighting for, and demonstrate the significance of the shift Bird and Rubenstein found from defense to war bonds.

The passivity implicit in the term "defense bonds" disappeared from other aspects of the bonds posters at about the same time. Nineteen forty-two in particular saw a wide variety of posters, as the government agencies producing them began to experiment with less passive methodologies. A key element of this strategic shift was the growing use of imagery of the soldier himself. Posters depicting the home front (which so dominate the early war bonds posters) were joined by posters depicting the men fighting World War II. From 1942 on, soldiers were seen in their full glory, often in their element, the field of battle. "Till We Meet Again," a poster from 1942, depicts a fresh-faced recruit waving goodbye as he is shipped off to (presumably) the front lines.<sup>18</sup> Another 1942 poster, "Attack Attack Attack," shows what happens when the soldiers arrive on the front lines. Determined soldiers charge with bayonets in hand, being covered by machine gun fire from their comrades still in the trenches. They charge over bleak earth, with a sky beset

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<sup>17</sup> "The Four Freedoms Posters," in Bird and Rubenstein, *Design for Victory: World War II Posters on the American Home Front*, 37.

<sup>18</sup> "Till We Meet Again," in Bird and Rubenstein, *Design for Victory: World War II Posters on the American Home Front*, 45.

with haze, smoke, and fighter aircrafts zooming overhead. “Attack Attack Attack” conjures emotion in those who look at it, encouraging citizens to buy war bonds to give the brave troops more supplies.<sup>19</sup>

Even though these battlefield images were designed to appeal to human emotion, there were limits imposed by the United States Treasury Department (a main issuer of war bonds posters) itself. Casualty images were banned from war bonds posters, and indeed, no images of dead or dying soldiers appear in this genre of poster. The closest thing to such an image that appears is the wounded man in “Doing All You Can, Brother?” and his head wound, though bloody, is not at all life-threatening. With this exception, wounded, dead, or dying soldiers were noticeably absent from war bonds posters. Interestingly, another major concern of the Treasury Department was to attempt and distract Americans from the reality of what their bond money would be used for. It is for this reason that battlefield images did not depict American soldiers slaughtering the enemy. In spite of the anger many Americans held towards Germany and Japan, such images did not hold appeal for American citizens coming to grips with the fact that their dollars were being used to kill fellow human beings. Instead, battlefield images were designed to portray American soldiers in a sympathetic light, and allow potential bond buyers to get behind their “boys.” Posters that depicted American soldiers in potential danger, for this reason, proved far more effective for the Treasury Department’s goals. “Stick With Me to the Finish,” a poster of unattributed date (but presumably having been released after the fall of Germany), depicts an American soldier on the ground, fingers dug into the earth for traction. A pained expression is on his face, with squinted eyes and

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<sup>19</sup> “Attack Attack Attack,” in Bird and Rubenstein, *Design for Victory: World War II Posters on the American Home Front*, 7.

his mouth opened in pain.<sup>20</sup> This depiction of the soldier stands in stark contrast to the fresh-faced youth in “Till We Meet Again.” In this sense, the posters not only displayed chronological advancement in poster strategy, but in the war itself. They depicted the changes that undoubtedly occurred to many soldiers, worn down and hurt from years of bloody combat. As the war dragged on, the posters continued to reflect the grinding, painful nature of combat, even as victory seemed in sight. Many 1944 and 1945 posters used the image of the soldier to encourage Americans to continue buying war bonds, as the theater of war shifts to the Pacific Ocean and Japan. “Stick With Me to the Finish” is a clear example of this concept. The pained soldier it depicts is a stark reminder that, though Germany has fallen, World War II is not over. Japan, the enemy that so cowardly attacked America at Pearl Harbor, still remains to be defeated. Several 1944-1945 posters conjure similar imagery, including “Next!” and “Buy That Invasion Bond!” These two posters, through a depiction of Japan in the former, and an invasion scene in the latter, show American viewers that the war is not over, and that their bond money is still vitally needed.<sup>21</sup>

The end of the war period also saw the introduction of two new terms for bonds: so-called “invasion” and “victory” bonds. Of these two, victory was the more enduring term, with invasion only appearing on one poster in my sample. Still, both were important for what they represented: a continuing evolution in terminology by poster designers in order to reflect the happenings of the war. The one occurrence of invasion bonds came in 1944, with the aptly titled “Buy That Invasion Bond.” This image of

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<sup>20</sup> “Stick With Me To The Finish,” in Bird and Rubenstein, *Design for Victory: World War II Posters on the American Home Front*, 47.

soldiers launching an invasion, with land, sea, and air clashes occurring all over, represents an image of the possible reality that was an invasion of the Japanese home islands. By 1944, the war in Europe was winding down, and eventually ended. This left Japan as the last Axis power in World War II. Rubenstein and Bird claim posters such as “Buy That Invasion Bond” evince a desire to keep bond money coming in, even with Germany knocked out of the war.<sup>22</sup> Victory bonds served a similar purpose. With victory over Japan in sight, “victory bonds” were no different from war bonds, save for their name. Even with World War II ending, there were still costs of the war that remained to be paid, and victory bonds would help pay these costs.

The change in war bonds posters over time can be seen as adjustments based on the realities of the war. Early posters focused on the home-front and the concept of defense to sell war bonds, but as the war dragged on and became more violent, America’s focus changed. With greater ideological purpose came new posters, focusing both on the shift from a defensive to an offensive war, and on the soldiers on the ground who were actually fighting the war. By showing the American soldier on the battlefield, and using imagery of implied danger, poster designers were able to get around Americans’ trepidation about their money being used to kill Germans and Japanese. Appealing to the emotions of the American public served the U.S. Treasury Department well, allowing it to create a variety of effective posters. The change from “defense” to “victory,” so easily visible in the posters, mirrors a very real change in philosophy on the part of those guiding the ideology of the war. Ultimately, it is that change that causes the greatest

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<sup>21</sup> Bird & Rubenstein, *Design for Victory: World War II Posters on the American Home Front*, 47.

<sup>22</sup> “Buy That Invasion Bond,” in Bird and Rubenstein, *Design for Victory: World War II Posters on the American Home Front*, 47.

changes over time in war bonds posters, and makes these posters so effective.

### **Careless Talk**

“Careless talk” posters, like war bonds posters, were a vital part of American home front strategy during World War II. Serving the purpose of educating Americans of the danger of spies and of leaked secrets, they used a variety of images to appeal to those who view them. Different from war bonds posters in that they were authorized to display images of American casualties, they invoked sympathy and guilt through a combination of these images and effective symbolism. They also indicated a sense of grand strategy from the very start. Rather than demonstrating a single, evolving strategy (as do the war bonds posters), these posters worked towards a two-pronged goal that was in place from almost day one.

While war bonds posters did not feature Americans in true danger, or casualty situations, posters encouraging Americans not to divulge war secrets followed no such rules. One of the constant features of such posters was indeed images of American casualties. An early 1942 poster, entitled simply “Someone Talked,” depicts an American soldier sinking beneath a watery surface. A desperate look appears on the man’s face, with his hand extended up above the water.<sup>23</sup> The image evokes sympathy in the viewer, equating the man’s impending demise with the misspoken words of an average American citizen: such as the reader of the poster. One year later, “A Careless Word - A Needless Loss” shows the entire body of an American casualty, lying dead in a field. The imagery of the poster is stark, with a black background surrounding the field and soldier.<sup>24</sup>

The use of casualties makes sense when one considers the consequences. The

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<sup>23</sup> “Someone Talked!” Northwestern University Library’s World War II Poster Collection.

<sup>24</sup> “A Careless Word, A Needless Loss,” Northwestern University Library’s World War II Poster Collection.



ramifications of citizens not buying war bonds are hazy at best. More to the point, the impact of one citizen not buying a war bond is impossible to determine, but likely will not play a major role in the war effort. By contrast, however, one spilled war secret could lead directly to the loss of American lives and equipment. It is a case of omission versus commission; that is, spilling a war secret is an act that is committed, while not buying war bonds is an act of omission, one that does not happen. For that reason, a case can easily be made that spilling a war secret is the far greater crime, meaning that more significant deterrence is needed. In war bonds advertisements, using casualty images to help persuade the viewer to buy bonds could be considered over-exposing the public to the harsh realities of the war. This might have run the risk of desensitizing the public, but the poster makers believed that Americans needed to know the realities on the ground in order to avoid complacency. Casualty images helped “make a distant war seem real to those who were expected to supply the resources, human effort, and political support needed for victory.”<sup>25</sup> Furthermore, American war agencies (as evidenced by the prior chapter) were able to come up with other effective ways to sell war bonds, making casualty images unnecessary.

The use of casualties allowed posters such as these to convey a different sense of emotion from the war bonds posters. Interestingly enough, these posters did not appeal to a sense of patriotism. There were no slogans calling for citizens to be good Americans by keeping quiet. Instead, the posters made appeals by showing the potential consequences of unwanted action. “Someone Talked” does this in a particularly subtle and effective method. The dying soldier’s hand extends towards the viewer, finger pointed as if in

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<sup>25</sup> George H. Roeder Jr., *The Censored War* (New Haven, 1993), 1.

accusation.<sup>26</sup> The implication is clear: one who spills war secrets is responsible for the death of any who die as a result of that information leak. A later poster even formalized this conjecture. The 1944 poster “Wanted!” shows a typical American woman depicted in a wanted poster format. Below her picture is a caption, reading “Her *careless talk* costs lives.”<sup>27</sup> These two posters help demonstrate the aforementioned trend. Guilt served in these posters as a powerful and primary motivator for keeping quiet.

It would be a mistake, however, to say that guilt was the only emotion used in these posters. Many of these works were incredibly poignant pieces, arousing sympathy in viewers even today. Among the best known of these is “Because Somebody Talked!” a 1944 offering submitted by an outside artist, Wesley Heyman. Heyman’s design of a cocker spaniel sitting on his master’s chair, with a gold star -- a military symbol designating the loss of a loved one -- displayed prominently in the background saw reproduction in the millions, making it one of the most requested images of the war.<sup>28</sup> The poster’s effectiveness comes from its raw emotion. The imagery of the dog sitting in the chair of his owner is heartbreaking and inspiring. Supplemented by the simple, yet effective text “Because Somebody Talked,” this poster, without a single physical image of a dead American soldier, is arguably far more poignant than posters including casualties.

The use of such emotional hooks in these posters was due to the more personal nature of the subject matter. It is difficult to make war bonds a personal issue. It is far

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<sup>26</sup> “Someone Talked!” Northwestern University Library’s World War II Poster Collection.

<sup>27</sup> “Wanted!” Northwestern University Library’s World War II Poster Collection.

<sup>28</sup> “Because Somebody Talked!” Northwestern University Library’s World War II Poster Collection.

easier to paint the loss of American lives as a personal issue, especially in a war where so many Americans fought. Considering the widespread nature of the war, it is likely that most citizens knew a soldier overseas, or at least knew someone who did. It was thus natural that these posters appealed more to the emotions and feelings of the American public. The use of guilt could be considered a result of this subject matter. As opposed to asking for the public to do something (buy war bonds), these posters asked the public to not do something. Human nature seems to state that when one is asked to keep a secret, the first thing one does is tell it to others. A campaign such as the one to sell war bonds, without demonstrated ramifications of non-compliance, would therefore have been ineffective for careless talk posters. Therefore, it makes sense that guilt would be used to help keep war secrets safe. Similar reasons lay behind the use of sympathy, as the emotional nature of the subject matter allowed for more emotional appeals to be made to the public at large.

These posters, however, pose perhaps an even more interesting conundrum. Both Nazis and Japanese occasionally make appearances as the enemy, but they are portrayed differently. The Nazis are almost always portrayed symbolically, through the use of a swastika, or a hand, but never an entire Nazi. “Bits of Careless Talk,” a 1943 poster, demonstrates the threat of spies through a puzzle metaphor, the puzzle being put together by a hand. On the hand’s finger is a ring, upon which is emblazoned a swastika.<sup>29</sup> One year later, “Award for Careless Talk” depicts the titular “award” as an iron cross, with a swastika in the center, held once again by a hand with a swastika ring.<sup>30</sup> The Japanese,

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<sup>29</sup> “Bits of Careless Talk,” Northwestern University Library’s World War II Poster Collection.

<sup>30</sup> “Award for Careless Talk,” Northwestern University Library’s World War II Poster Collection.

however, are almost always portrayed in such a way that their faces, if not whole bodies, can be seen. “He’s Watching You” demonstrates this, in its portrayal of a presumably Asian man with thin, cruel eyes, hiding behind a barrier in hopes of finding out American secrets.<sup>31</sup>

There are various possible reasons for this phenomenon. One is a simple matter of practicality. Nazi Germany was readily recognized for the swastika, while Imperial Japan lacked a widely recognizable symbol. Even if one considers the imperial flag design, that design is both larger and less-known than the swastika. It is possible that symbolism would have been used for both enemy forces had a widely recognizable symbol for Japan existed. Another explanation centers on the fact that, to many Americans, the Japanese were the primary enemy. After all, they had bombed Pearl Harbor, drawing America into the war. For this reason, images of Japanese soldiers or spies could be perceived to draw a more visceral reaction than would a symbol. Meanwhile, the swastika was the image on the Nazi battle flag, visible in newspapers and other print media available to millions of Americans. In many ways, it was the public face of the Nazi movement.

More cynically, a Japanese man, for the purposes of posters, could be portrayed as a generic Asian man. Drawing a German man would be a more difficult task. While one could portray him as the Aryan stereotype, such a portrayal could offend blonde haired, blue eyed Americans who did not support the Nazi regime. Furthermore, hundreds of thousands of German immigrants had come to America over the years, forming a far larger chunk of the American population than Japanese-Americans. It must also be noted that hatred towards the Japanese was more fervent than hatred towards the Nazis. In

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<sup>31</sup> “He’s Watching You,” Northwestern University Library’s World War II Poster Collection.

*Freedom From Fear*, David Kennedy notes that American soldiers performed a range of atrocities on the Japanese, including shooting prisoners, making necklaces out of ears, and even creating letter openers from bones.<sup>32</sup> After all, German-Americans were not deported to internment camps during World War II; Japanese-Americans were. The voting power that German-Americans wielded was undoubtedly a factor in why Nazis were portrayed through symbols, while the rare appearances of Japanese were made as body parts or whole people.

Unlike war bonds posters, the variance over time in careless talk posters came as a result of the refinement of strategy, as opposed to wholesale strategy changes. Over time, these posters educated citizens both on the dangers of spies and the consequences of allowing information to fall into the wrong hands. By 1944, these two tactics essentially resulted in the drafting of the American citizen as a sort of “citizen-soldier,” charged with protecting the vital resource of information. A second development came as “careless” was canonized as the buzzword for talk that results in information falling into enemy hands. Both of these developments had textual and graphic components, resulting in subtle refinements to a strategy that achieves an overall goal.

The first type of careless talk poster is mainly educational in nature, at least in its early incarnations. While no invasion of American soil followed Pearl Harbor, the government was very concerned about spies infiltrating America. This was a threat that the American public was unlikely initially aware of, as the main theatres of war were the Pacific Ocean and Europe, both removed from the American mainland by thousands of miles. Clearly, the American public needed to be made aware of these threats. Early 1942

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<sup>32</sup> David Kennedy, *Freedom From Fear: The American People in Depression and War 1929-1945* (New York, 1999), 812.

posters set out to do just this. The most basic of these says, simply, “The Enemy is Listening.” Beneath this simple message is the warning that “He wants to know what *you* know,” and finally, the encouragement to “keep it to yourself.”<sup>33</sup> There are no pictures at all on this poster, no images of American casualties, nothing to distract the reader from the straightforward message the poster bears. Nor is there any emotion in the words of this poster. It is what it appears to be: a warning to the citizens of America to keep quiet in order to benefit the war effort. A slightly more complicated effort follows in the form of “He’s Watching You.” This poster introduces the image of a spy’s head peeking out from behind a barrier, eyes opened and alert. His facial features are vaguely Asian, likely calling to mind the subterfuge of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, having occurred scant months earlier on December 7, 1941. This poster introduces the image of the spy: decidedly un-American, and determined to find out whatever he can to hurt the American war effort.<sup>34</sup> The campaign of public education continues into 1943, with two more posters serving as excellent examples. “Who Wants to Know?” simply shows an American soldier with a battle-stressed expression on his face. The subtitle “Silence Means Security” elaborates on the public information campaign of the U.S. Office of War Information.<sup>35</sup> While blabbing results in the death of American troops, silence keeps them safe. This is the first time that security is explicitly addressed in the posters, and is also the first explicit statement that silence will protect American troops. Slightly more subtle is “If You Tell Where He’s Going,” which shows a sailor carrying supplies. The punch line of this poster is “He may never get there!” This states once again that blabbing

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<sup>33</sup> “The Enemy is Listening,” Northwestern University Library’s World War II Poster Collection.

<sup>34</sup> “He’s Watching You,” Northwestern University Library’s World War II Poster Collection.

has a great likelihood of resulting in American loss.<sup>36</sup> With these initial seeds planted, the recruiting of the citizen-soldier begun. A 1943 poster called “I’m Counting on You!” features this thesis’ impetus, Uncle Sam, the famous figure best known for his appearances on recruiting posters. In this poster, Uncle Sam exhorts the reader to not give information on “troop movements,” “ship sailings,” or “war equipment.”<sup>37</sup> Essentially, this amounts to Uncle Sam being used for his usual recruiting role; he is effectively recruiting the home front to serve the country, not with guns and bullets, but with silence. The theme of the citizen-soldier in this sense is elaborated by a more direct comparison to the fighting forces one year later. “The Battle-Wise Infantryman,” a 1944 poster, is simple in its execution. Depicting a soldier staring out of the poster at the reader, the full text reads “The battle-wise infantryman... is careful of what he says or writes. How about you?”<sup>38</sup> This poster text directly compares the battle-hardened soldier, by now having been on the battlefield since the very end of 1941 or beginning of 1942, to the common American citizen on the home front. Combined with the prior poster, the implication is simple. No longer are Americans simply supposed to avoid careless talk for the sake of saving soldiers. It has now become the duty of the “citizen-soldier” to prevent leaks of information. Many posters of the era sought to include the citizen in the war effort, whether through buying war bonds, or planting victory gardens. Posters comparing the citizen to the soldier included the citizen in the war effort even more explicitly. Rather than simply funding or aiding the effort, they were essentially now acting as soldiers,

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<sup>35</sup> “Who Wants To Know?” Northwestern University Library’s World War II Poster Collection.

<sup>36</sup> “If You Tell Where He’s Going,” Northwestern University Library’s World War II Poster Collection.

<sup>37</sup> “I’m Counting On You!” Northwestern University Library’s World War II Poster Collection.

<sup>38</sup> “The Battle-Wise Infantryman,” Northwestern University Library’s World War II Poster Collection.

guarding important war information. By utilizing this tactic, the American government succeeded at telling the American public to keep their lips zipped. Indeed, the main purpose of this strain of posters was clearly to warn the public of the threat of spies and how to avoid giving them information. These posters generally were less likely to feature casualties or show other consequences of failing to heed warnings. These consequences were focused on in the second variety of careless talk posters.

The second strain of careless talk posters focused on the consequences of information leaks, in often explicit terms. Such posters carry different text and imagery from the earlier type, as demonstrated by the 1942 effort “Someone Talked!” mentioned earlier in this section. It is among the earliest posters to feature an American casualty, as well as directly tie the death of American servicemen to the release of classified information. More explicit posters elaborate on this theme throughout the remainder of the war years. Another 1942 poster, “Somebody Blabbed!” shows the hand of a drowning sailor, along with his cap floating on the water. The title of the poster clearly makes the cause of the soldier’s death not drowning, but negligence on the part of a citizen-soldier.<sup>39</sup> Perhaps the most explicit example, though, is the earlier-discussed poster “A Careless Word, A Needless Loss,” with its depiction of a soldier lying dead in a field. In this poster, the man who died as a result of negligence is given not only a face, but an entire body as well. As in “Somebody Blabbed,” the poster’s text states the soldier’s cause of death explicitly, that cause being careless talk.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> “Somebody Blabbed! (blue background),” Northwestern University Library’s World War II Poster Collection.

<sup>40</sup> “A Careless Word, A Needless Loss,” Northwestern University Library’s World War II Poster Collection.



It is important to note that both varieties of careless talk posters ran roughly simultaneously, and were seen throughout the war. Taken together, they formed what amounts to a combined strategy to educate the American public on the danger of spies, tell Americans how to protect their troops, and show the consequences of even small leaks in information. As opposed to the war bonds posters, which seemed to follow a single, evolving strategy, careless talk posters demonstrate two parallel strategies, working at the same time to provide a bigger picture. This indicates the existence, in some form, of a more clear strategy on the part of the poster creators. There is no genre-defining change in terminology, as we see occurs from “defense bonds” to “war bonds.” The posters may become more effective, but this is a result of a focusing of the message, not a wholesale tactical change.

There is another key change that occurred in these posters, due to the need to better get across the message. This change was the eventual adoption of “careless” as the word to describe chatter that falls into enemy hands. William Bird, Jr. and Harry Rubenstein in *Design for Victory* refer to this genre of posters as careless talk posters, for lack of a better name, and with no explanation.<sup>41</sup> After studying the material, that name is legitimate, both as it stands and as a development over time. The first use of “careless” occurred roughly in 1942, with “A Careless Word, A Needless Sinking.” Subsequent posters, including “Bits of Careless Talk,” “A Careless Word, A Needless Loss,” and “A Careless Word, Another Cross,” (the latter two from 1944) also used the term “careless.” Before this, terminology varied from poster to poster. Many posters simply encouraged Americans to button their lips, or keep quiet, or any of a number of synonymous phrases.

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<sup>41</sup> Bird and Rubenstein, *Design for Victory: World War II Posters on the American Home Front*, 45.

By 1943, though, “careless” seemed to be the word of choice. Of the eleven pre-1943 posters I surveyed, only one featured the word “careless.” From 1943 on, however, “careless” features in slightly over half (eight out of fourteen) of the posters sampled.

The reason for this change was twofold. There needed to be a name, a unifying factor for all of these posters. Posters selling war bonds, for example, were war bonds posters. By codifying the terminology, the poster-making organs of the U.S. government were able to give the scourge of leaked information a name. Secondly, by dubbing such talk “careless,” the implication was made that those who blabber war secrets simply do not care about the war effort. What some might see as an “accident” in another context is here dubbed “careless” in order to show the importance of keeping quiet, and encourage compliance with the posters’ edicts.

Ultimately, careless talk posters demonstrated their own set of tools, strategies, and methodologies. The use of casualty images gave many of these posters a poignancy that war bonds posters rarely were able to reach. Guilt and sympathy led the emotions that such posters conjure, in an effort to keep American servicemen from dying as a result of a careless word. Furthermore, the use of a unified strategy was unique among the three types of posters studied in this survey. War bonds strategy was far more evolutionary in nature. As we shall see, recruiting methods are varied from day one, following little linear progression. It is a combination of the “careless” terminology and the evolution of the citizen into the citizen-soldier that made these posters so interesting. While war bonds posters tried very hard to make the citizen a part of the war through the ownership of bonds, careless talk posters made the citizen a part of the war by simply reading them. The posters were, in that sense, a thin, papery commanding officer, giving marching

orders to the millions of Americans charged with protecting war secrets.

## **Recruitment**

Even in the field of recruitment where Uncle Sam loomed large, the supposedly monolithic nature of World War II posters is easily disproved. This is so true that the word “recruitment” itself may not be a sufficient term to describe the type of poster. Recruitment posters often did not even have the words “recruit” or “enlist” on them. Instead, these posters fall into two categories that I have dubbed “educational” and “recruitment-oriented.” Furthermore, Uncle Sam calling for citizens to join the army is indicative of but one branch of the armed services. Recruitment posters worked on behalf of the Army, Navy, Marines, Coast Guard (even in non-combat positions) and the cadet nurse program. These cadet nurse posters serve as a contrasting point with the first four branches, as they demonstrate recruiting pitches aimed at women as opposed to men. Like war bonds and careless talk posters, the posters follow a spectrum of appeals, from patriotic to self-interested, placing the final nail in the coffin of the myth of the monolithic World War II poster.

When the image of a recruitment poster comes to mind, one conjures up the image of a poster appealing to the patriotic nature of the viewer to fight for his country against wicked opposition. With some exceptions, this is not what was actually printed. While appeals to patriotism were indeed utilized, they tended to be used in a more subtle way. By using patriotic, human-oriented, and self-interest based appeals, “recruitment-oriented” and “educational” posters reached a wide variety of audiences with effective messages.

“Recruitment-oriented” posters were designed to pluck potential soldiers off the street and inspire them to go to their local enlistment office. Patriotism plays an important

role in recruitment posters, and is certainly more prevalent than in the other two poster types. Among the most blatant examples is “The *U.S.S. Marblehead* Comes Home,” an offering depicting the titular ship, along with text praising the ship’s efforts in combat. The poster calls for men with “good red fighting blood” in their veins to enlist, promising that there will be a spot in the Navy for them.<sup>42</sup> This poster clearly appeals to the “red-blooded American male.” By using the tale of the *U.S.S. Marblehead*, the Navy demonstrates the sort of person it wants. It is the “courage, stamina, and resourcefulness” of the *Marblehead*’s sailors that the Navy credits with the ship returning home safely, and it is these qualities that the Navy values in its sailors.

Some posters, though, choose to appeal more to human considerations than pure patriotism. “Keep ‘Em Flying!” from 1941 serves as an early example of this concept. The only words on this poster are the title, along with “Presented by the United States Army Recruiting Service.” “Keep ‘Em Flying” seems to be a slogan of the army during this period, as it appears on several other posters. Depicting a wide variety of images of both home front and war zone behind a soldier carrying a bayonet-tipped rifle, the images seem to be in the thoughts of the (presumably) new recruit. Clutching his weapon, he thinks of all he is fighting to protect: his family and loved ones at home, as well as his comrades in all branches of the military. The image itself speaks volumes about the motivations for a man to enlist, even without the blurb at the bottom indicating that it is indeed a recruitment poster.<sup>43</sup> I refer to this sort of poster as “recruitment-oriented,” as opposed to recruiting because these posters are generally not blatant in nature. Rather,

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<sup>42</sup> “The *U.S.S. Marblehead*,” Northwestern University Library’s World War II Poster Collection.

<sup>43</sup> “Keep ‘Em Flying,” Northwestern University Library’s World War II Poster Collection.

through imagery or other means, they seek to make recruitment attractive using a variety of techniques. Here, while the U.S. flag does make an appearance, it is the serviceman's desire to protect his fellow man that seems to have inspired his enlistment. Rather than a purely patriotic appeal, "Keep 'Em Flying" makes a human-oriented one.

As effective and important as patriotic and human-oriented appeals are, appeals to self-interest are also important to these posters. "Healthy Bodies - Active Minds" shows one motivation utilized by the military to recruit soldiers: self-betterment. Depicting "before" and "after" pictures of recruits, the images are designed to show that military service can turn the average weakling on the street into a muscular, tough soldier. The poster's slogan indicates the point the U.S. Navy wants to make: "Men build the NAVY...The NAVY builds Men!"<sup>44</sup> This sort of implication gives a motivation that is similar to that used by war bonds poster creators, namely self interest. These appeals, though, are not identical. War bonds posters often cite personal economic gain that can be obtained through the bonds. The motivation used here by the poster maker is of an even more personal nature. "Healthy Bodies - Active Minds" does not promise wealth. Nor does it advertise the possibility of fame or shiny badges. Instead, it vows to make the recruited soldier into a real "man," with rippling muscles and combat experience.

This promise is borne out in myriad other recruiting posters that depict the American soldier. "O'er The Ramparts We Watch," a 1945 poster, depicts a member of the U.S. Air Force as if he had stepped off the set of *Top Gun*. With his brown bomber jacket and rugged good looks, the Air Force pilot projects an image of manhood that is

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<sup>44</sup> "Healthy Bodies - Active Minds," Northwestern University Library's World War II Poster Collection.

easy to want to aspire to.<sup>45</sup> “Ouch!” shows Lieutenant Bullkeley, an officer in the Navy, in a similarly flattering manner. In full dress uniform, the lieutenant cuts a striking profile, and serves as another image of what the soldier looks like.<sup>46</sup> The soldier is a handsome, strong, and courageous man. He embodies the best traits of all that is masculine, serving as a shining example during the dark time of warfare. It is with this image that the army seeks to convince potentially skeptical citizens to become the courageous soldiers of the future.

Keeping in mind this concept, a more complete sense of how recruiting works emerges. The military wanted to appeal to the courageous and bold, the fit and hale, and the well-prepared, but it recognized that there was a finite amount of such men. Indeed, not all men could be as handsome, dashing, and brave as those they depict in their posters. With posters such as “Healthy Bodies - Active Minds,” though, the military appealed to a larger group of men: men who wanted to embody those ideals, but might not (in their own minds or otherwise) have done so. Like a master sculptor, the military turned rough lumps of clay (recruits) into meticulously detailed and sculpted masterpieces (soldiers). By taking this approach, the military opened up a wider range of citizens from which to draw soldiers, a vitally important point during a war fought by the United States on two fronts that saw 405,399 Americans die.<sup>47</sup>

While “recruitment-oriented” posters targeted those eligible for service immediately, “educational” posters often were aimed at students. The purpose of these posters was to show them aspects of the armed forces, the skills they would need if they

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<sup>45</sup> “O’er The Ramparts We Watch,” Northwestern University Library’s World War II Poster Collection.

<sup>46</sup> “Ouch!” Northwestern University Library’s World War II Poster Collection.

wished to enlist, or both. “Navy Educational Program” serves as an example of an educational poster. The poster depicts alphabet signaling flags, showing the viewer a variety of the devices used for signaling. Also on the poster is a letter from the issuing authorities, designed to make students in school aware of the qualities and skills desired by the armed forces.<sup>48</sup> Nowhere on this poster is there the word “Enlist!” in big, bold letters, nor are there any overblown patriotic images. Instead, this poster appeals to the patriotic in a subtler way, showing the tools that midshipmen use to communicate on ships, and giving information as to the skills any future recruits would need should they decide to enlist. Thus, educational posters serve as a means of “soft recruiting,” allowing the armed forces to target those not yet of age to serve, while at the same time being non-explicit in their message.

Achieving this goal even less explicitly is the brilliantly simple “Insignia of the Army of the United States.” The poster shows the pins, symbols, and badges that adorn the uniform of an Army soldier.<sup>49</sup> By doing so, the poster creates a glamorous image of the soldier. To a viewer seeing this poster, the army is portrayed as a place where one can achieve honor and receive numerous awards for valor and merit. While this may be true, the poster obviously does not depict the possibility of death and loss of life. Educational posters tend to be neutral in tone, a far cry from the emotional word choice used in both careless talk and war bonds posters. They seek mainly to inform potential future soldiers of elements of the armed forces or needed qualities, hence my dubbing them “educational” posters. They plant the idea of being a soldier in the minds of potential

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<sup>47</sup> Kennedy, *Freedom From Fear: The American People in Depression and War 1929-1945*, 856.

<sup>48</sup> “Navy Educational Program (Alphabet Signal Flags),” Northwestern University Library’s World War II Poster Collection.



soldiers, making them more susceptible to “recruitment-oriented” posters.

The question of why such “educational” posters were needed can be answered simply: the need for more manpower. This type of poster began in 1942-1943, by which time it was plainly obvious that World War II could drag on for a very long time. The Japanese were still expanding their territory in the Pacific in 1942, and the Nazis still held large chunks of Europe. Appealing to the eighteen and nineteen year olds of 1942 and 1943 was not enough; the government realized that it had to appeal to the eighteen and nineteen year olds of 1944 and 1945, or risk a shortage of soldiers as the war went on. Perhaps equally importantly, the posters helped reach out to those who already wanted to become soldiers. By informing these future soldiers of the skills that were desired in the armed forces, the government gave these young men concepts and subjects to study while in school. Therefore, in theory, the eighteen and nineteen year olds of 1944 and 1945 would not only enlist in similar or greater numbers than those of 1942 and 1943, they would be more skilled soldiers to boot.

It was for this same reason that posters sold military service to a group traditionally not associated with the military: women. Nurses were needed to take care of the American troops. Some of the techniques used to recruit men (for example, appealing to a masculine ideal) naturally would not work on women. Therefore, posters designed to reach women employed two different tactics. One was the creation of a feminine ideal that parallels the masculine ideal in other posters, while the second appealed to self-interest very similar in nature to those used in war bonds posters.

The image of the soldier portrayed in recruitment posters is that of a strong, well-

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<sup>49</sup> “Insignia of the Army of the United States,” Northwestern University Library’s World War II Poster Collection.

built, handsome man. It thus stands to reason that the image of the cadet nurse portrayed in recruitment posters would be a beautiful, successful woman. Indeed, this is exactly what the posters show. “Be a Cadet Nurse” from 1944 is an excellent example of this depiction. Two nurses are shown, in full dress uniform. Their hair is done up nicely, and both have bright, open eyes, rosy, red cheeks, and pouty lips.<sup>50</sup> Other posters bear out this trend. The exact specifics of the women may change; hair color may be blonde instead of brunette, or the uniform may be slightly different, but the one constant is that the cadet nurse is portrayed in a beautiful, alluring light.

This, though, is only part of creating an ideal female. The image constructed by these posters is not merely that of a beautiful woman, but also that of a successful one. Success comes into the equation through the appeal to self-interest that these posters utilize. This appeal comes in the form of the promise to qualified candidates of a free lifetime education. Much in the same way that nurses are always portrayed as beautiful, this promise appears on four of six posters recruiting cadet nurses.<sup>51</sup> The promise in “Be a Cadet Nurse” goes further, as its slogan proclaims the cadet nurse to be the “girl with a future.” This future comes from the free education that the military is willing to provide to cadet nurses. Upon returning from war, these nurses would get a good education, which would allow them to get a good job. Alternately, their experience in wartime of taking care of soldiers gives them experience that could be used in the home as well, should they choose to remain at home as housewives. Either way, their experience in the Cadet Nurse program prepared them for the future. This image of the woman in posters

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<sup>50</sup> “Be a Cadet Nurse,” Northwestern University Library’s World War II Poster Collection.

<sup>51</sup> Statistic derived from analysis of my sample. A complete list of posters I looked at for this project can be seen in Appendix A.

can be compared to Maureen Honey's assessment of women in magazines and popular fiction of the World War II era. The women of posters and magazines are "self-actualizers," with ambitions and goals.<sup>52</sup> By seeing one of these posters, a prospective cadet nurse candidate could see her future self in the position of the nurse: ready to live out her dreams and ambitions in the world. The nurse's position was portrayed as both glamorous and successful, in both the present (wartime) period and afterwards. In doing so, the poster designers set themselves up with the best possible chance to recruit vitally needed personnel for the war effort, in the process demonstrating the versatility that they utilized in designing war posters.

This leaves but one question: why the lack of giant "Enlist!" commands spread all over recruitment posters? After all, war bonds posters explicitly tell people to purchase bonds, and careless talk posters often flat-out tell the reader not to spill war secrets. The answer to this question lies in the nature of what is being asked of the audience. All three types of poster discussed in this paper required some sort of sacrifice on the part of the American public. War bonds posters asked for an economic sacrifice in the form of buying war bonds. Ideally, this sacrifice would be paid back plus interest when the bonds mature, but the government still asked a public only a few years removed from the Great Depression for money to help fight the war. Careless talk posters asked for a slight sacrifice of an American's usual freedoms. Freedom of speech is one of the central rights Americans possess, and yet, the nature of the war mandated that the government ask that Americans not discuss war secrets amongst themselves. Important though these sacrifices were, the most important sacrifice was asked for by recruitment posters, which called

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<sup>52</sup> Maureen Honey, *Creating Rosie the Riveter: Class, Gender, and Propaganda During World War II* (Amherst, 1984), 3.

upon civilians to risk their lives fighting in the bloodiest conflict in the history of the world.

Orders of “Enlist!” were few and far between for this reason. The sacrifice demanded by recruitment posters created far more conflict and inner doubt in the eyes of the public than the other two. After all, compared to risking one’s life, keeping quiet or buying a war bond were minor sacrifices. To command citizens to enlist could be seen as insensitive or heavy-handed. Still, the early posters predictably came across more strongly. As in both war bonds and “careless talk” posters, chronology plays an important role in understanding elements of recruitment posters. Posters from 1942, in the wake of Pearl Harbor, could afford to be more explicit in their requests and demands. As the war continued, though, so too did news of the war. How could the American government, in such a situation, convince rational Americans to go off to war? The answer, in most cases, was a shift in emphasis. No longer was it implied that Americans needed to serve in war. Instead, the new message was more of a plea than a command; a plea for those who were able to come defend their homeland. America needed every soldier it could get, and this message is made clear in many posters. A key example is “Let’s Finish the Job,” from 1944, which calls for experienced seamen to join the U.S. Merchant Marine. This call is expressed as “urgent” by the poster itself. Wearing a brown jacket, with a face either covered in grime or tanned by the sun, a sailor stares out of the poster, almost as if pleading with the reader to come help him.<sup>53</sup>

The recruitment poster is not monolithic for all of these reasons. The posters

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<sup>53</sup> “Let’s Finish the Job,” Northwestern University Library’s World War II Poster Collection.

themselves can be classified as having different intents within the overall goal of recruiting, be they laying the groundwork for recruiting future soldiers (“educational” posters), or doing the actual dirty work (“recruitment-oriented” posters). Furthermore, they target different groups of people. Posters aimed at future soldiers still in school are clearly different from those designed to appeal to men who can become soldiers in the present, which in turn are clearly different from posters recruiting for the cadet nurse program that targeted women. Finally, the tone of the posters changed as the war went on. The more commanding posters of 1942 were joined by more pleading posters from 1944 and onward, inspired by the horrors of war.

## **Conclusion**

This study has looked at three major varieties of World War II posters. One could come up with dozens of categories if one wished, on topics ranging from factory production to nutrition. Lacking the space to consider all of these categories, this study has nonetheless demonstrated several key points about the nature of World War II posters, and why they simply do not fit the monolithic image they have been given.

First is the simple fact that there are so many poster categories. World War II posters are emphatically not all images of Uncle Sam proclaiming “I Want You!” Posters were a well thought out and important part of American strategy during the war. Bird and Rubenstein accurately state that “posters conveyed more than simple slogans. Posters expressed the needs and goals of the people who created them.”<sup>54</sup> These “needs and goals” are extremely varied concepts that often evolve through time. The selling of war bonds, encouraging of citizens to not spill war secrets, and recruitment of soldiers are not static concepts. This is another factor that ultimately argues against the viability of the monolithic poster. A single poster, by itself, is merely a snapshot in time. While much can be learned from a snapshot, history is fluid. My goal in crafting this work was to create motion from these snapshots, to try and show the posters within their time. In doing so, I have demonstrated that there is a great deal of change in posters over the course of World War II. What worked as a method to advertise war bonds in 1942 often did not work in 1945. Like any other advertising agency, the U.S. government attempted different strategies at different times. Some transformations endured, such as the change from “defense” to “war” in bond advertisements, while others changes only appeared on

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<sup>54</sup> Bird and Rubenstein, *Design for Victory: World War II Posters on the American Home Front*, 1.

a single poster, such as the attempts to introduce “invasion” bonds in 1944. This implies that not all posters were equally successful. While this paper does not go into the topic of reception, occasionally, it does mention that some posters were wildly successful, such as “Because Somebody Talked.” In spite of the popularity of such a poster, the sheer amount of different tactics and strategy employed implies that the term “World War II poster” is not specific enough to use when describing the many varied works created during the war.

Beyond overall methodology, the sheer range of imagery that the posters evoke also argues against the World War II poster as monolithic. While many people may identify Uncle Sam with the medium, he by no means appears in a large number of posters. In fact, out of one-hundred twenty-one posters I looked at, over the three categories, Uncle Sam appears a grand total of *three* times.<sup>55</sup> Even the American soldier, theoretically the ink and paper representation of all Americans fighting overseas, does not appear in as many posters as one might think. Poster imagery goes far beyond the realm of combat. The home front is explored, with Christmas trees and a mother and daughter combination designed to arouse the mind (among other things) serving as key centerpieces for posters.

The primary reason for this diversity is to create a broader base of appeal. While soldiers are effective imagery in many sorts of posters, other themes might well require a Christmas tree. It is through looking at the imagery used that Bird and Rubenstein’s statement that “posters conveyed more than simple slogans” is made entirely accurate. A child seeing a poster of a mother and daughter saving money for war bonds together

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<sup>55</sup> Statistic derived from analysis of my sample.

likely would identify more with that poster than with one of a scary-looking soldier. The goal of these posters was to mobilize American men, women, and children for the war effort. Under such circumstances, different sorts of images were needed to reach the wide variety of groups that made up the public at large.

This paper does not seek to argue that Uncle Sam should be removed from the pages of history texts the world over. Rather, it argues that Uncle Sam is merely one of a series of images that characterize what World War II posters are. War bonds, careless talk, and recruitment may be the overarching subjects uniting these posters, but each poster is like a snowflake: no two are truly alike. In the veritable blizzard of posters, it is understandable that historians have seized upon a single iconic image to depict the art form to those who know little about it. While understandable, however, this paper's findings lead to one, inexorable conclusion. This well-constructed image of posters as monolithic is undeniably and hopelessly flawed.



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*Northwestern University Library*. Northwestern University.  
20 December 2006. <<http://www.library.northwestern.edu/govinfo/collections/wwii-posters/>>



## Appendix A List of Posters

### Key:

NUL = Northwestern University Library's World War II Poster Collection

AAS = American Antiquarian Society

DFV = *Design for Victory*

**Bold text denotes a poster that is directly cited in the paper and thus appears in Appendix B.**

### War Bonds:

Boeing Aircraft Company. "Thanks a Million!" 1942 (DFV).

Issuing agency unknown. "A Half Filled Stamp Album is Like a Half Equipped Soldier." 1942 (NUL).  
<<http://www.library.northwestern.edu/govinfo/collections/wwii-posters/img/ww1647-03.jpg>>.

**Issuing agency unknown. "Attack Attack Attack." 1942 (DFV).**

Issuing agency unknown. "Back Your Future With U.S. Savings Bonds." 1946 (NUL).  
<<http://www.library.northwestern.edu/govinfo/collections/wwii-posters/img/ww1647-33.jpg>>.

**Issuing agency unknown. "Buy A Share in America (America Bank)." 1941 (NUL).**  
<<http://www.library.northwestern.edu/govinfo/collections/wwii-posters/img/ww0207-73.jpg>>.

**Issuing agency unknown. "Buy a Share in America (Handshake)." 1941 (NUL).**  
<<http://www.library.northwestern.edu/govinfo/collections/wwii-posters/img/ww1647-27.jpg>>.

Issuing agency unknown. "Buy Defense Savings Stamps Here." 1942? (NUL).  
<http://www.library.northwestern.edu/govinfo/collections/wwii-posters/img/ww1647-48.jpg>

Issuing agency unknown. "For Defense Buy U.S. Savings Bonds and Stamps." 1941 (NUL).  
<<http://www.library.northwestern.edu/govinfo/collections/wwii-posters/img/ww1647-28.jpg>>.

Issuing agency unknown. "Help Him, Help Yourself." 1942 (NUL).  
<<http://www.library.northwestern.edu/govinfo/collections/wwii-posters/img/ww1646-32.jpg>>.

Issuing agency unknown. "Help Send Them What It Takes to Win." 1943 (NUL).  
<<http://www.library.northwestern.edu/govinfo/collections/wwii-posters/img/ww1645-16.jpg>>.

Issuing agency unknown. "Let's Fly This Flag by New Year's." 1944 (NUL).  
<<http://www.library.northwestern.edu/govinfo/collections/wwii-posters/img/ww1646-80.jpg>>.

Issuing agency unknown. "Our Class Below 90%." 1945? (NUL).  
<<http://www.library.northwestern.edu/govinfo/collections/wwii-posters/img/ww1646-28.jpg>>.

**Issuing agency unknown. "Stick With Me to the Finish." No date known (DFV).**

Issuing agency unknown. "This Is My Fight Too!" 1942 (NUL).  
<<http://www.library.northwestern.edu/govinfo/collections/wwii-posters/img/ww0870-15.jpg>>.

Issuing agency unknown. "Women at War Buy War Bonds." 1942 (NUL).  
<<http://www.library.northwestern.edu/govinfo/collections/wwii-posters/img/ww1647-02.jpg>>.

**Office of War Information. "Save Freedom of Speech." 1943 (NUL).**  
<<http://www.library.northwestern.edu/govinfo/collections/wwii-posters/img/ww0870-12.jpg>>.

**Office of War Information. "Save Freedom of Worship." 1943 (NUL).**  
<<http://www.library.northwestern.edu/govinfo/collections/wwii-posters/img/ww0207-29.jpg>>.

United States Army. "Buy Bonds the GI Way." 1944 (NUL).  
<<http://www.library.northwestern.edu/govinfo/collections/wwii-posters/img/ww1647-32.jpg>>.

U.S. Treasury Department. "A War Message From the Treasury Department." 1942? (NUL).  
<http://www.library.northwestern.edu/govinfo/collections/wwii-posters/img/ww0207-15.jpg>

U.S. Treasury Department. "Aim to Win." 1942 (NUL).  
<<http://www.library.northwestern.edu/govinfo/collections/wwii-posters/img/ww1645-20.jpg>>.

U.S. Treasury Department. "Back 'Em Up!" 1944 (DFV).

**U.S. Treasury Department. "Buy Bonds Regularly." 1945 (DFV).**

**U.S. Treasury Department. "Buy That Invasion Bond!" 1944 (DFV)**

U.S. Treasury Department. "Buy War Bonds." 1942 (NUL).  
<<http://www.library.northwestern.edu/govinfo/collections/wwii-posters/img/ww1647-14.jpg>>.

U.S. Treasury Department. "Care is Costly." 1945 (DFV).

**U.S. Treasury Department. "Doing All You Can, Brother?" 1943 (NUL).**  
<<http://www.library.northwestern.edu/govinfo/collections/wwii-posters/img/ww0207-32.jpg>>.

U.S. Treasury Department. "Don't Let That Shadow Touch Them." 1942 (NUL).  
<<http://www.library.northwestern.edu/govinfo/collections/wwii-posters/img/ww0207-29.jpg>>.

U.S. Treasury Department. "For Freedom's Sake." 1943 (NUL).  
<<http://www.library.northwestern.edu/govinfo/collections/wwii-posters/img/ww1647-24.jpg>>.

U.S. Treasury Department. "Give Us More of These!" 1941 (DFV).

**U.S. Treasury Department. "Give War Bonds, The Present With A Future." 1943 (NUL).**  
<<http://www.library.northwestern.edu/govinfo/collections/wwii-posters/img/ww1647-15.jpg>>.

**U.S. Treasury Department. "I Gave A Man!" 1942 (NUL).**  
<<http://www.library.northwestern.edu/govinfo/collections/wwii-posters/img/ww1647-63.jpg>>.

U.S. Treasury Department. "Independence." 1942 (NUL).  
<<http://www.library.northwestern.edu/govinfo/collections/wwii-posters/img/ww1646-15.jpg>>.

**U.S. Treasury Department. "Buy Victory Bonds." 1945 (DFV).**

U.S. Treasury Department. "John Paul Jones Said." 1942 (NUL).  
 <<http://www.library.northwestern.edu/govinfo/collections/wwii-posters/img/ww1646-15.jpg>>.

U.S. Treasury Department. "Keep Us Flying!" 1943 (DFV).

U.S. Treasury Department. "Let 'Em Have It!" 1943 (DFV).

U.S. Treasury Department. "Let's Fly This Flag!" 1942 (NUL).  
 <<http://www.library.northwestern.edu/govinfo/collections/wwii-posters/img/ww0207-75.jpg>>.

U.S. Treasury Department. "Let's Hit the Bull's Eye!" 1942 (NUL)  
 <<http://www.library.northwestern.edu/govinfo/collections/wwii-posters/img/ww1646-60.jpg>>.

U.S. Treasury Department. "Lexington, 1775." 1942 (NUL).  
 <<http://www.library.northwestern.edu/govinfo/collections/wwii-posters/img/ww1646-15.jpg>>.

U.S. Treasury Department. "Next!" 1944 (DFV).

U.S. Treasury Department. "Now All Together." 1945 (DFV).

**U.S. Treasury Department. "Protect His Future." 1945 (DFV).**

U.S. Treasury Department. "Save for Security." 1941 (NUL).  
 <<http://www.library.northwestern.edu/govinfo/collections/wwii-posters/img/ww0207-29.jpg>>.

**U.S. Treasury Department. "This Year, Give a Share in America." 1941 (DFV).**

**U.S. Treasury Department. "Till We Meet Again." 1942 (DFV)**

U.S. Treasury Department. "To Have and to Hold!" 1944 (NUL).  
 <<http://www.library.northwestern.edu/govinfo/collections/wwii-posters/img/ww0207-64.jpg>>.

U.S. Treasury Department. "U.S. Treasury News Bulletin." 1942? (NUL).  
 <<http://www.library.northwestern.edu/govinfo/collections/wwii-posters/img/ww1647-05.jpg>>.

U.S. Treasury Department. "Victory." 1945 (DFV).

U.S. Treasury Department. "Wanted-- Fighting Dollars." 1942 (NUL).  
 <<http://www.library.northwestern.edu/govinfo/collections/wwii-posters/img/ww1645-56.jpg>>.

U.S. Treasury Department. "Washington Crossed the Delaware." 1942 (NUL).  
 <<http://www.library.northwestern.edu/govinfo/collections/wwii-posters/img/ww1646-15.jpg>>.

**U.S. Treasury Department. "We Can, We Will, We Must!" 1942 (NUL).**  
 <<http://www.library.northwestern.edu/govinfo/collections/wwii-posters/img/ww1647-07.jpg>>.

U.S. Treasury Department. "We Can't All Go... But We Can All Help!" 1942 (NUL).  
 <<http://www.library.northwestern.edu/govinfo/collections/wwii-posters/img/ww1646-30.jpg>>.

U.S. Treasury Department. "You Buy 'Em, We'll Fly 'Em!" 1942 (NUL).  
 <<http://www.library.northwestern.edu/govinfo/collections/wwii-posters/img/ww0207-76.jpg>>.

U.S. Treasury Department. "You Can't Afford to Miss Either!" 1944 (NUL).  
 <<http://www.library.northwestern.edu/govinfo/collections/wwii-posters/img/ww0207-74.jpg>>.

**U.S. Savings Bonds Division. "Even a Little Can Help a Lot-- Now!" 1942 (NUL).**  
<<http://www.library.northwestern.edu/govinfo/collections/wwii-posters/img/ww1646-44.jpg>>.

U.S. War Finance Division. "For Liberty and Peace on Earth." 1944 (NUL).  
<<http://www.library.northwestern.edu/govinfo/collections/wwii-posters/img/ww1646-14.jpg>>.

U.S. War Finance Division. "Help Equip G.I Joe With Your War Savings." 1944 (NUL).  
<<http://www.library.northwestern.edu/govinfo/collections/wwii-posters/img/ww1646-16.jpg>>.

U.S. War Finance Division. "This War Will Be Over Some Day." 1944 (NUL).  
<<http://www.library.northwestern.edu/govinfo/collections/wwii-posters/img/ww1647-68.jpg>>.

### **Careless Talk Posters**

Issuing agency unknown. "If You Must Talk." 1942 (DFV).

Seagram Distillers Corporation. "Loose Lips Might Sink Ships." 1942 (DFV).

U.S. Adjutant-General's Office. "Careless Talk Got There First." 1944 (NUL).  
<<http://www.library.northwestern.edu/govinfo/collections/wwii-posters/img/ww1647-82.jpg>>

U.S. Adjutant-General's Office. "If You Tell Where He's Going." 1943 (NUL).  
<<http://www.library.northwestern.edu/govinfo/collections/wwii-posters/img/ww1647-84.jpg>>

U.S. Adjutant-General's Office. "Wanted!" 1944 (NUL).  
<<http://www.library.northwestern.edu/govinfo/collections/wwii-posters/img/ww0207-80.jpg>>

U.S. Adjutant-General's Office. "Who Wants to Know?" 1943 (NUL).  
<<http://www.library.northwestern.edu/govinfo/collections/wwii-posters/img/ww1647-65.jpg>>

U.S. Adjutant-General's Office and U.S. Office of War Information. "Award for Careless Talk." 1944 (NUL). <<http://www.library.northwestern.edu/govinfo/collections/wwii-posters/img/ww1647-66.jpg>>

U.S. Adjutant-General's Office and U.S. Office of War Information. "Because Somebody Talked!" 1944 (NUL). <<http://www.library.northwestern.edu/govinfo/collections/wwii-posters/img/ww1647-83.jpg>>

U.S. Adjutant-General's Office and U.S. Office of War Information. "Bits of Careless Talk." 1943 (NUL). <<http://www.library.northwestern.edu/govinfo/collections/wwii-posters/img/ww1647-87.jpg>>

U.S. Adjutant-General's Office and U.S. Office of War Information. "Careless Talk Got There First." 1944 (NUL). <<http://www.library.northwestern.edu/govinfo/collections/wwii-posters/img/ww1647-82.jpg>>

U.S. Adjutant-General's Office and U.S. Office of War Information. "The Battle-Wise Infantryman." 1944 (NUL). <<http://www.library.northwestern.edu/govinfo/collections/wwii-posters/img/ww1647-80.jpg>>

U.S. Army Ordnance Department. "God Help Me if This is a Dud!" 1942 (NUL).  
<<http://www.library.northwestern.edu/govinfo/collections/wwii-posters/img/ww1646-11.jpg>>

**U.S. Office for Emergency Management's Division of Information. "He's Watching You."** 1942 (NUL). <<http://www.library.northwestern.edu/govinfo/collections/wwii-posters/img/ww0207-02.jpg>>

**U.S. Office of Facts and Figures. "The Enemy is Listening."** 1942 (NUL).  
<<http://www.library.northwestern.edu/govinfo/collections/wwii-posters/img/ww0207-82.jpg>>

**U.S. Office of Facts and Figures. "Somebody Blabbed (blue background)."** 1942 (NUL).  
<http://www.library.northwestern.edu/govinfo/collections/wwii-posters/img/ww1647-39.jpg>

**U.S. Office of Facts and Figures. "Somebody Blabbed (red background)."** 1942 (NUL).  
<<http://www.library.northwestern.edu/govinfo/collections/wwii-posters/img/ww1647-38.jpg>>

**U.S. Office of the Provost Marshal General. "Warning."** 1943 (NUL).  
<<http://www.library.northwestern.edu/govinfo/collections/wwii-posters/img/ww0207-79.jpg>>

**U.S. Office of War Information. "A Careless Word, A Needless Loss."** 1943 (NUL).  
<<http://www.library.northwestern.edu/govinfo/collections/wwii-posters/img/ww1645-29.jpg>>

**U.S. Office of War Information. "A Careless Word, A Needless Sinking."** 1942 (NUL).  
<<http://www.library.northwestern.edu/govinfo/collections/wwii-posters/img/ww1645-28.jpg>>

**U.S. Office of War Information. "A Careless Word, Another Cross."** 1943 (NUL).  
<<http://www.library.northwestern.edu/govinfo/collections/wwii-posters/img/ww1645-26.jpg>>

**U.S. Office of War Information. "I'm Counting On You!"** 1943 (NUL).  
<<http://www.library.northwestern.edu/govinfo/collections/wwii-posters/img/ww1647-34.jpg>>

**U.S. Office of War Information. "If You Talk Too Much."** 1942 (NUL).  
<<http://www.library.northwestern.edu/govinfo/collections/wwii-posters/img/ww1646-72.jpg>>

**U.S. Office of War Information. "Less Dangerous Than Careless Talk."** 1944 (NUL).  
<<http://www.library.northwestern.edu/govinfo/collections/wwii-posters/img/ww1645-27.jpg>>

**U.S. Office of War Information. "Someone Talked!"** 1942 (NUL).  
<<http://www.library.northwestern.edu/govinfo/collections/wwii-posters/img/ww0207-04.jpg>>

**U.S. Office of War Information. "The Sound That Kills."** 1942 (NUL).  
<<http://www.library.northwestern.edu/govinfo/collections/wwii-posters/img/ww1646-71.jpg>>

### **Recruitment:**

Issuing agency unknown. "Sub Spotted." 1942? (NUL).  
<<http://www.library.northwestern.edu/govinfo/collections/wwii-posters/img/ww0207-68.jpg>>

Issuing agency unknown. "The Navy Needs You!" Year unknown. Found in the American Antiquarian Society, Worcester, MA.

Issuing agency unknown. "Your Duty Ashore." 1944? (NUL)..  
<<http://www.library.northwestern.edu/govinfo/collections/wwii-posters/img/ww1645-14.jpg>>

**U.S. Adjutant-General's Office and U.S. Army Recruiting Publicity Bureau. "Here's Your Opportunity If You Work With Tools."** 1942 (NUL).  
<<http://www.library.northwestern.edu/govinfo/collections/wwii-posters/img/ww1645-85.html>>

**U.S. Adjutant-General's Office and U.S. Army Recruiting Publicity Bureau. "Insignia of the Army of the United States." 1943 (NUL).**

**<<http://www.library.northwestern.edu/govinfo/collections/wwii-posters/img/ww0207-78.jpg>>**

U.S. Army Air Forces and Brown & Bigelow. "O'er the Ramparts We Watch." 1945 (NUL).

<<http://www.library.northwestern.edu/govinfo/collections/wwii-posters/img/ww1647-67.jpg>>

U.S. Army Recruiting Publicity Bureau & U.S. Army Signal Corps. "Do You Know Radio, Telephone, or Telegraph Work?" 1942 (NUL). <<http://www.library.northwestern.edu/govinfo/collections/wwii-posters/img/ww0870-16.html>>

U.S. Army Recruiting Publicity Bureau. "Action!" 1942 (NUL).

<<http://www.library.northwestern.edu/govinfo/collections/wwii-posters/img/ww0207-08.jpg>>

U.S. Army Recruiting Publicity Bureau. "Can You Qualify as an Aviation Cadet?" 1942? (NUL).

<<http://www.library.northwestern.edu/govinfo/collections/wwii-posters/img/ww0207-07.jpg>>

U.S. Army Recruiting Publicity Bureau. "Fight With Tools." 1942? (NUL).

<<http://www.library.northwestern.edu/govinfo/collections/wwii-posters/img/ww0207-11.jpg>>

**U.S. Army Recruiting Publicity Bureau. "Keep 'Em Flying!" 1942? (NUL).**

**<<http://www.library.northwestern.edu/govinfo/collections/wwii-posters/img/ww0207-12.jpg>>**

U.S. Army Recruiting Publicity Bureau. "Keep 'Em Flying" is Our Battle Cry!" 1942? (NUL).

<<http://www.library.northwestern.edu/govinfo/collections/wwii-posters/img/ww0207-09.jpg>>

U.S. Army Recruiting Service. "Can You Qualify for the Army Air Corps?" 1941 (NUL).

<http://www.library.northwestern.edu/govinfo/collections/wwii-posters/img/ww1645-31.jpg>

U.S. Army Recruiting Service. "Keep 'Em Flying!" 1945. (NUL).

<<http://www.library.northwestern.edu/govinfo/collections/wwii-posters/img/ww1647-86.jpg>>

U.S. Army Recruiting Service. "The Flag of the United States of America." 1942 (NUL).

<<http://www.library.northwestern.edu/govinfo/collections/wwii-posters/img/ww1645-32.jpg>>

U.S. Army Service Forces. "The Educational Forces of the United States Army." 1943? (NUL).

<http://www.library.northwestern.edu/govinfo/collections/wwii-posters/img/ww1646-27.jpg>

U.S. Army Women's Army Auxiliary Forces. "What Women Do in the WAAC." 1942 (NUL).

<<http://www.library.northwestern.edu/govinfo/collections/wwii-posters/img/ww1645-81.html>>

U.S. Bureau of Naval Personnel. "Freshmen! Sophomores!" 1942 (NUL).

<<http://www.library.northwestern.edu/govinfo/collections/wwii-posters/img/ww0207-34.jpg>>

**U.S. Bureau of Naval Personnel. "Healthy Bodies - Active Minds." 1942 (NUL).**

**<<http://www.library.northwestern.edu/govinfo/collections/wwii-posters/img/ww1646-84.jpg>>**

U.S. Bureau of Naval Personnel. "Naval Aviation Has a Place For You." 1941 (NUL).

<<http://www.library.northwestern.edu/govinfo/collections/wwii-posters/img/ww1646-86.jpg>>

U.S. Bureau of Naval Personnel. "Navy Day." 1941 (NUL).

<<http://www.library.northwestern.edu/govinfo/collections/wwii-posters/img/ww0207-67.jpg>>

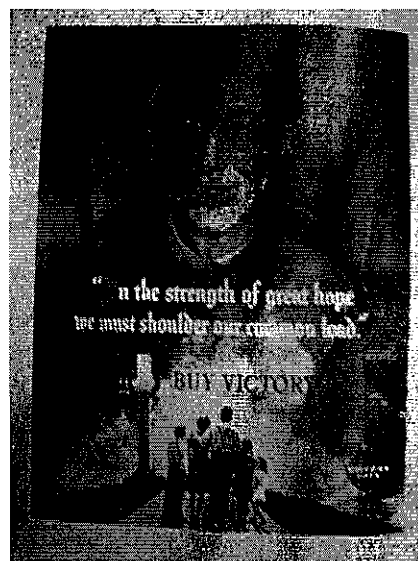
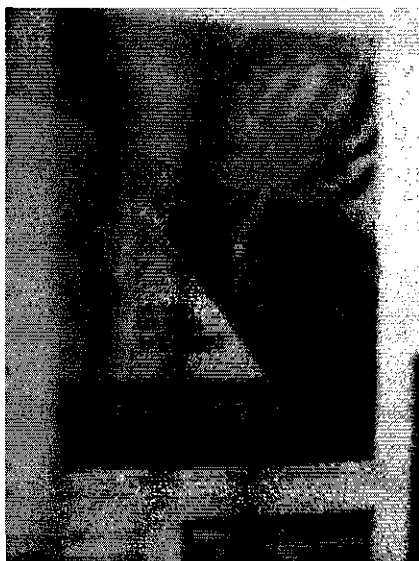


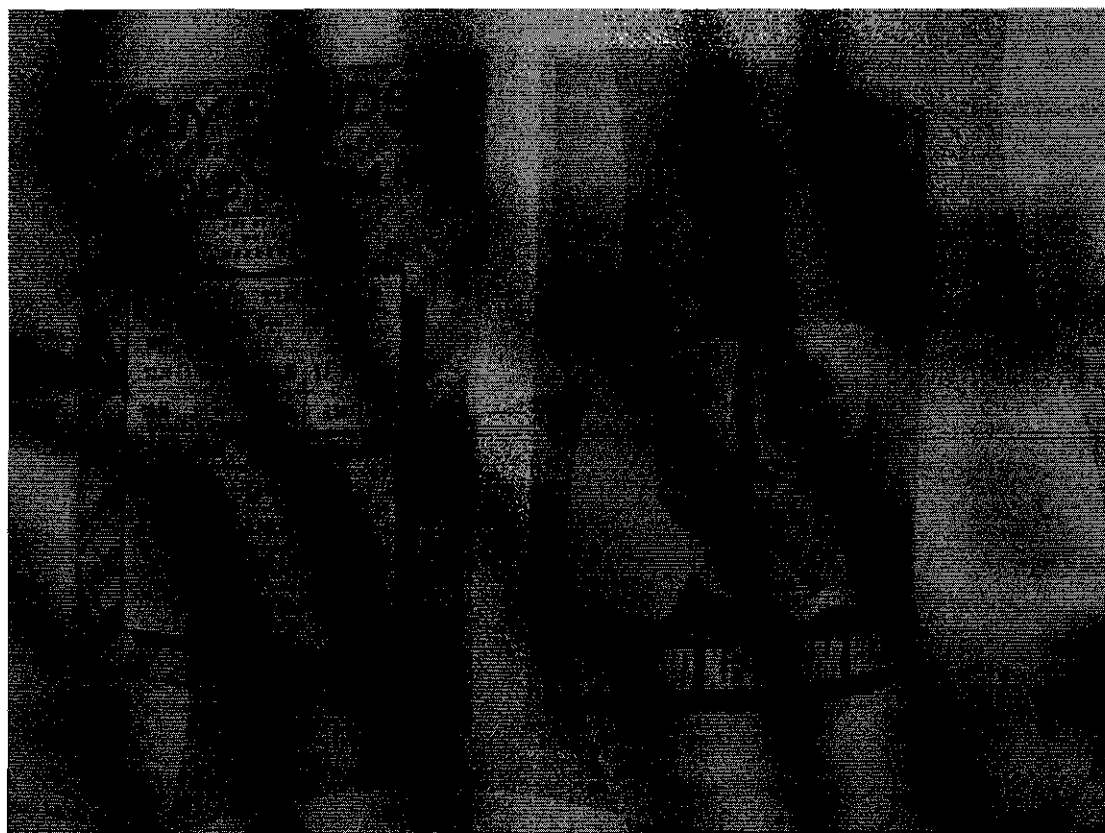
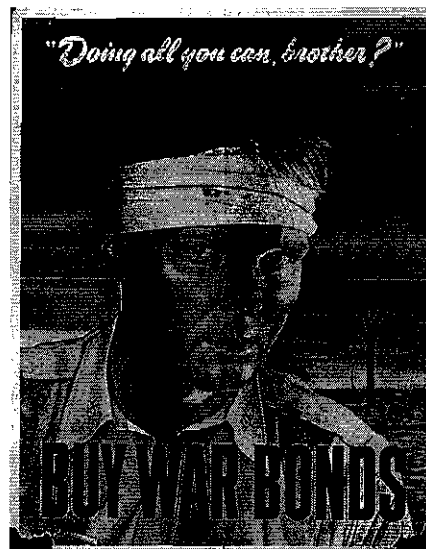
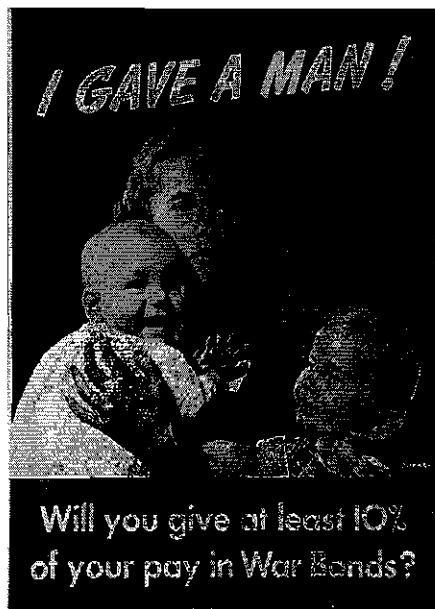
- U.S. Bureau of Naval Personnel. "Navy Educational Program (Alphabet Signal Flags)." 1942 (NUL).** <<http://www.library.northwestern.edu/govinfo/collections/wwii-posters/img/ww1647-13.jpg>>
- U.S. Bureau of Naval Personnel. "Navy Educational Program (Elementary & Secondary Schools 2.)." 1942 (NUL). <<http://www.library.northwestern.edu/govinfo/collections/wwii-posters/img/ww1647-11.jpg>>
- U.S. Bureau of Naval Personnel. "Navy Educational Program (Elementary & Secondary Schools 2.) 1942 (NUL). <<http://www.library.northwestern.edu/govinfo/collections/wwii-posters/img/ww1647-12.jpg>>
- U.S. Bureau of Naval Personnel. "Navy Educational Program (Mathematics & Science)." 1942 (NUL). <<http://www.library.northwestern.edu/govinfo/collections/wwii-posters/img/ww0207-30.html>>
- U.S. Bureau of Naval Personnel. "Ouch!" 1942 (NUL).** <<http://www.library.northwestern.edu/govinfo/collections/wwii-posters/img/ww1646-85.jpg>>
- U.S. Bureau of Naval Personnel. "The U.S.S. Marblehead Comes Home!" 1942 (NUL).** <<http://www.library.northwestern.edu/govinfo/collections/wwii-posters/img/ww1646-87.jpg>>
- U.S. Bureau of Naval Personnel. "Uniform Insignia." 1942 (NUL). <<http://www.library.northwestern.edu/govinfo/collections/wwii-posters/img/ww1646-88.jpg>>
- U.S. Bureau of Naval Personnel. "Your Job in the Navy." 1942 (NUL). <<http://www.library.northwestern.edu/govinfo/collections/wwii-posters/img/ww0207-69.jpg>>
- U.S. Coast Guard. "Piping All Hands for the U.S. Coast Guard." 1942 (NUL). <<http://www.library.northwestern.edu/govinfo/collections/wwii-posters/img/ww1646-29.html>>
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- U.S. Federal Security Agency. "A Lifetime Education Free." 1945 (NUL). <<http://www.library.northwestern.edu/govinfo/collections/wwii-posters/img/ww1645-84.jpg>>
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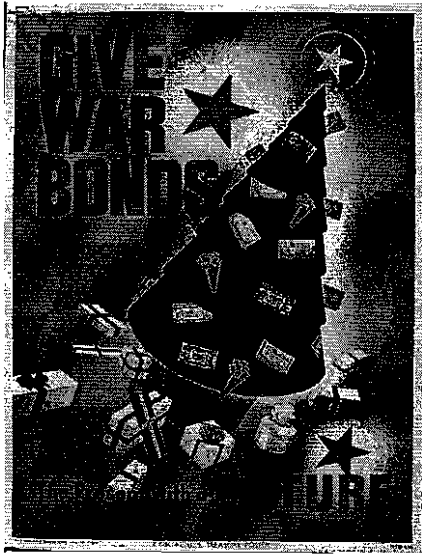
## Appendix B Selected Poster Images

These images appear roughly in their order of citation in the text. With the exception of a few posters, this appendix contains images for all of the posters cited.

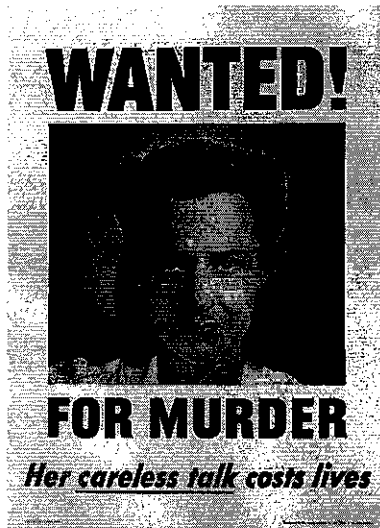
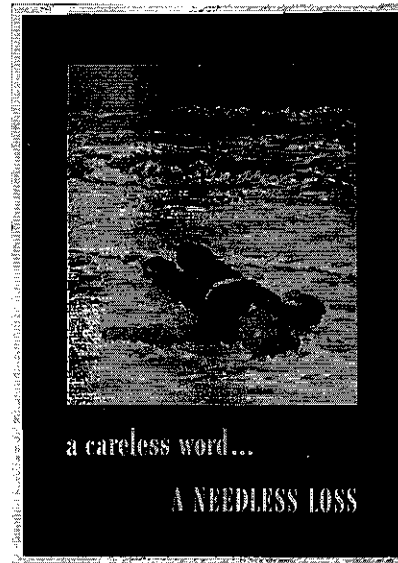
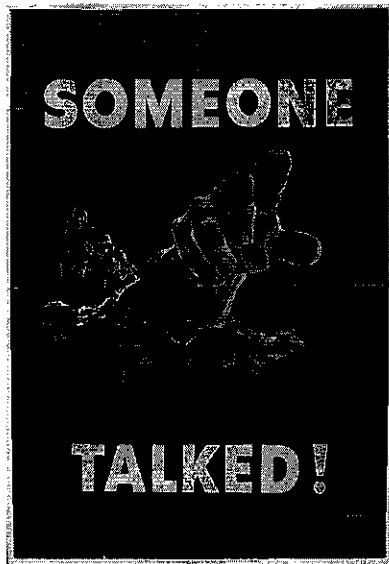
### War Bonds:

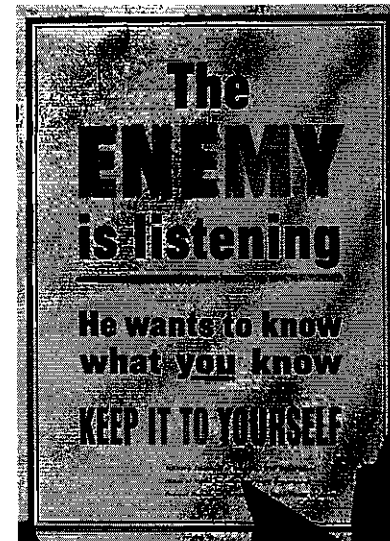
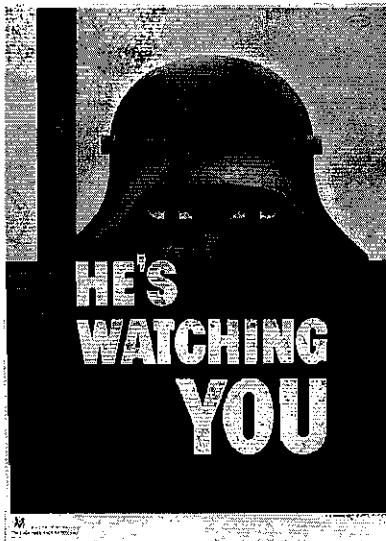
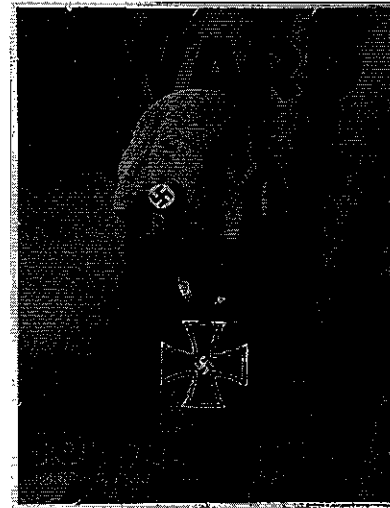


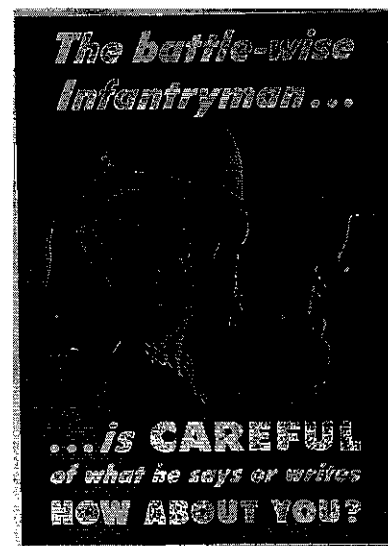
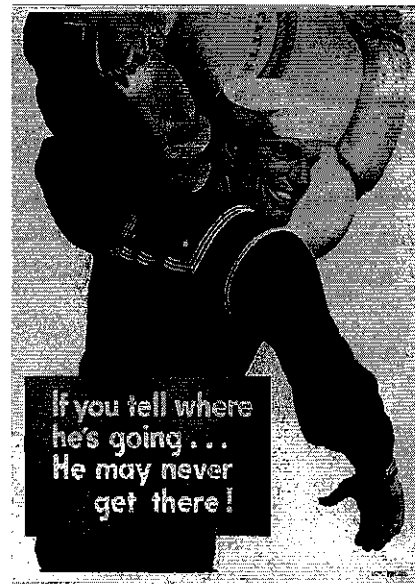




## Careless Talk







# SOMEBODY BLABBED



## BUTTON YOUR LIP!

FOR MORE INFORMATION, WRITE TO THE UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF WAR, WASHINGTON, D.C. 20301. THIS POSTER IS A PROPERTY OF THE UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT. IT IS LOANED TO YOU BY THE NATIONAL ARCHIVES. IT IS NOT TO BE REPRODUCED OR TRANSMITTED IN ANY FORM OR BY ANY MEANS, ELECTRONIC OR MECHANICAL, INCLUDING PHOTOCOPYING, RECORDING, OR BY ANY INFORMATION STORAGE AND RETRIEVAL SYSTEM, WITHOUT PERMISSION IN WRITING FROM THE NATIONAL ARCHIVES. 1942-1943



## Recruitment

**THE U.S.S. MARBLEHEAD COMES HOME!**

Whoever men gather to speak of brave deeds the  
 age of the Marblehead will rank with the greatest.  
 After the battle of Iwo Jima, this gallant ship  
 took her place in the line and accepted the challenge  
 of a worthy superior foe. With guns blazing a torrent  
 of steel she fought her way close only to be hampered  
 without quarter from the Japs.  
 The enemy reported her as sunk. With steaming guns  
 thrust out, with great gunners huddling in her sides, she  
 started her own steaming thousand mile voyage to  
 safety. Only the courage, vision and unselfishness  
 of men who would not "leave an old ship" brought  
 her home.

If good red fighting blood flows in your veins, if  
 you want the dramatization of men such as those on  
 the Marblehead—go to your nearest Navy Recalling  
 Station today!

There's a letter in the U. S. Navy waiting for you.

U.S.S. MARBLEHEAD (BB-49)

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**Keep 'em Flying!**

PRESENTED BY THE UNITED STATES ARMY RECRUITING SERVICE

[illegible]

